
When Thieves Fall Out

by Frans Bostrom

Published in *The Northwest Worker* [Everett, WA], whole no. 246 (Sept. 23, 1915), pg. 2.

A circular letter of 16 pages is being sent out by Carl D. Thompson of the Information Department of the National Office and John Engdahl, editor of *The American Socialist*, severely criticizing Walter Lanfersiek, the National Secretary, for inefficiency and mismanagement. The letter, which is signed also (partly) by Ralph Korngold, director of the Literature Department, is addressed to the National Committee and demands the immediate recall of the National Secretary. It is claimed that at least \$4,000 have been wasted through his incompetency.

This is probably true; but what of it? The infamous meeting of the National Committee of 1913, which declined to probe the raping of the national referendum by the Executive Committee, concerning the recall of J. Mahlon Barnes as campaign manager, fired Work and elected Lanfersiek. Work, although not a strong man, had nevertheless too much manhood to be acceptable. He was apt to expose any attempt to govern the party without the consent of the governed.

No one had any right to expect big things from Lanfersiek, and he has disappointed no one. His occupation was that of lawyer and for eight years he had been State Secretary of Kentucky, an organization of about 800 members. In the Washington controversy he certainly proved himself a loyal servant of the bunch that had set its mind upon the destruction of the Washington party. But there was a limit to his pliability. In the course of time he began to understand the dignity of his high office and undertook to assert it. Then the trouble also began. He objected to the violation of the constitution by the Executive Committee when it sent one of its members, George Goebel, on a speaking tour through the South at an expense of \$200. George, by the way, delights in expensive trips and has more than once been the cause of rumpus because of his luxurious predilections. Comrade Lanfersiek later on found that his department chiefs, thanks

to their close connection with Berger, forgot to render him the homage due him, and resented his superintendence. Everything would probably have come off okay if the finances of the Party had not begun to cause anxiety. Comrade Lanfersiek was compelled to admit failure and to point out causes and remedies. There is not a city in the land, with commission form of government, where the commissioners do not have such fun when it comes to trimming down the budget and the National Office might have learnt a lesson from practical politicians. They should do their fighting among themselves and not let us mutts know anything about it.

Suppose he has wasted \$4,000. The Information Department has cost more than \$5,000 per year for nearly three years and every cent of it was wasted. The Literature Department has always been managed at a loss. Charles H. Kerr, a private corporation, has always managed to come out all right in the same business. But Kerr is printing books worth reading, which is seldom the case with the Literature Department. Kerr can sell books at a price that makes it possible for State Secretaries, locals, and bookstores to do business with him, but the National Office does not attempt to do it.

Now, the idea seems to be to get rid of Lanfersiek before the election in November. If the Executive Committee has the chance to appoint his successor before the election, they know very well that their appointee could not be defeated for the office. There would be no use in nominating an opponent even. It is understood that their choice would be [Adolph] Germer and it would be impossible to make a worse selection. He is a cheap demagogue. Engdahl, the editor of *The American Socialist*, who, as editor of the *Chicago daily*, probably more than anyone else contributed to the death of that colorless misfit publication, may be considered. It is to be hoped that the National Committee has decency enough to pay no attention to this belated criticism but will permit the term of Lanfersiek to expire in its natural way and thus let the membership decide who is to be his successor.

Edited by Tim Davenport

1000 Flowers Publishing, Corvallis, OR · February 2016 · Non-commercial reproduction permitted.